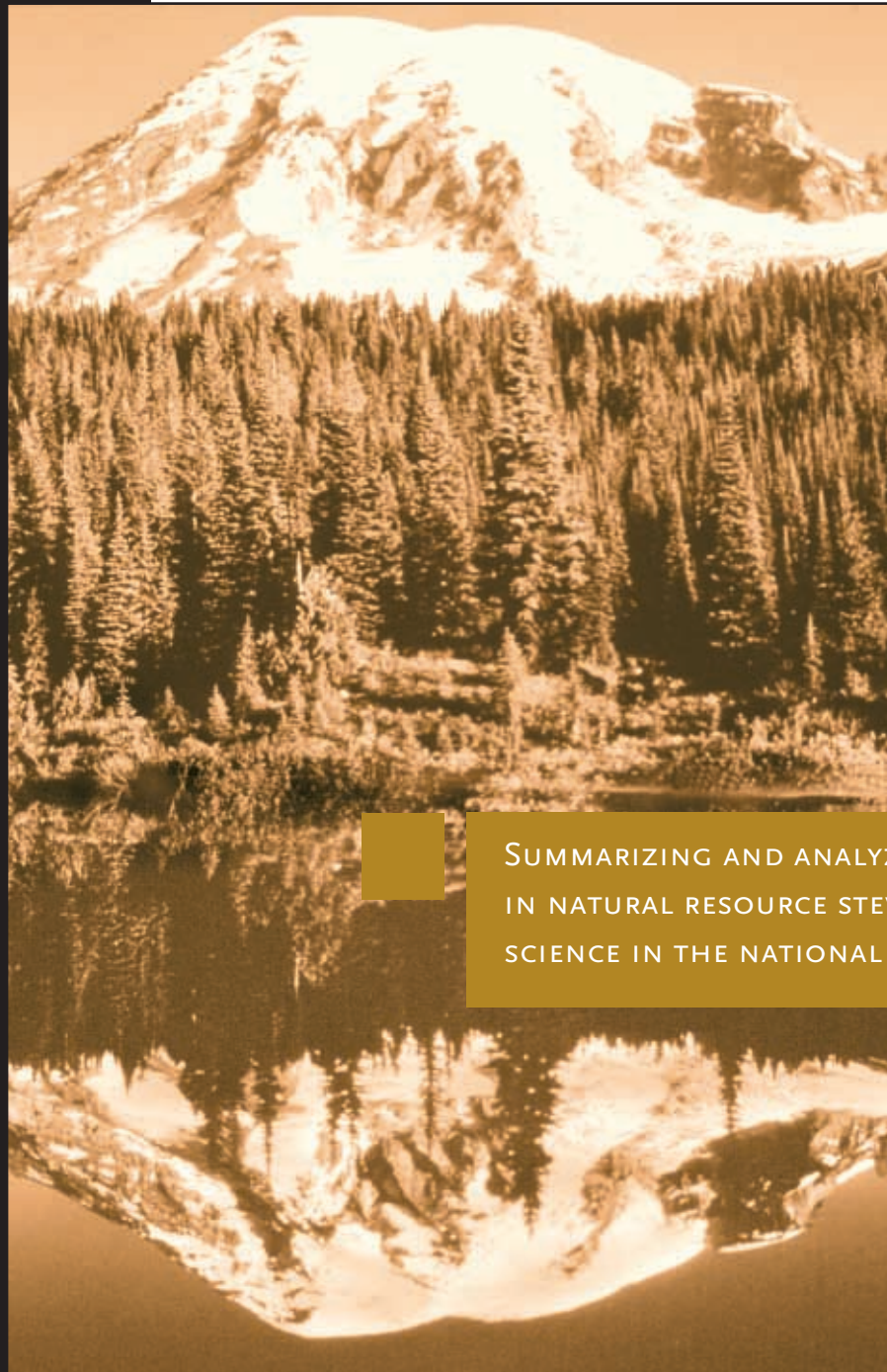


# NATURAL RESOURCE YEAR IN REVIEW—1999

U.S. Department of the Interior • National Park Service



SUMMARIZING AND ANALYZING THE YEAR  
IN NATURAL RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP AND  
SCIENCE IN THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM

■ Year at a Glance • The Year in Review • New Horizons •  
Challenges • NPS Science • Parks as Laboratories •  
Resource Risks • Restoration • Science Outreach •  
Looking Ahead ■



## Natural Resource Year in Review—1999

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**Hopes ran high for the Natural Resource Challenge during 1999**, a transition year from planning to implementation of the all-important initiative. In August, NPS Director Stanton launched the Challenge in a speech at Mount Rainier, Washington, on the occasion of the park's centennial celebration.

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## Year at a Glance—1999

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### January

The White-tailed Deer Management Program of Gettysburg National Military Park is reinstated by a federal district court in Pennsylvania following a lawsuit brought by groups opposing the program.

A federal district court in Montana blocks the National Park Service from issuing a finding of no significant impact, which stops NPS plans for the removal of rare trees in order to build a parking lot in Glacier National Park.

The National Park Service participates in the Panel on the Ecological Integrity of Canada's National Parks, noting similarities in problems affecting Canadian and U.S. national parks.

### February

Forty-six African oryx are removed from White Sands National Monument, New Mexico, in the first of several planned operations to rid the park of this nonnative antelope species that degrades park soils and vegetation.

### March

The steering committee for the Natural Resource Initiative reviews a draft of 12 consolidated action plans that will later become the Natural Resource Challenge and the associated requests for budget increases.

### April

The first island foxes on San Miguel Island at Channel Islands National Park, California, are captured as part of a captive-breeding program established to bolster the species' declining numbers.

The EPA promulgates new regulations requiring state governments to improve visibility in 48 units of the national park system through overall reductions in regional haze, rather than focusing solely on pollution from individual sources as in the past.

A congressionally mandated partnership is formed between the National Park Service and the Foundation for Shackleford Horses, Inc., for the joint management of feral horses at Cape Lookout National Seashore, North Carolina.

### May

Regulations pertaining to the National Natural Landmarks Program are published in the *Federal Register*, ending a 10-year moratorium on the designation of new sites and granting landmark owners a 90-day period to withdraw their property from landmark status.

A coordinated, interagency water quality-monitoring program begins at St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, Minnesota and Wisconsin, to provide data for modeling the impacts of increased nutrient enrichment, particularly phosphorus.

A technical literature review conducted by the NPS Water Resources Division links two-stroke engines used in personal watercraft to water pollution and answers questions about risks to water quality in parks.

### June

The National Park Service reviews its draft management policies, which contain language that would require managers to err on the side of resource protection when making decisions that pit visitor enjoyment against resource preservation.

The "Island Explorer" bus system operates for the first time at Acadia National Park, Maine, reducing traffic and natural resource-related impacts.

### July

Underwater spires consisting of siliceous remains of diatoms and filamentous bacteria and containing trace amounts of heavy metals commonly associated with hydrothermal vents are discovered on the floor of Yellowstone Lake.

Following years of study and planning, the lighthouse at Cape Hatteras National Seashore, North Carolina, is moved to a new location, safe for now from the natural process of shoreline erosion.

### August

At Mount Rainier National Park, Washington, Director Stanton announces the Natural Resource Challenge, the National Park Service's action plan for preserving natural resources.

## YEAR AT A GLANCE—1999

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt appoints a new National Park System Advisory Board, which includes three members with natural resource science credentials.

High school students document a new species of damselfly for Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tennessee, as part of a hands-on science education program that contributes data to the All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory.

Eight Ph.D. students are named recipients of the Canon National Parks Science Scholars Program awards, which focus dissertation research on the national park system.

### September

The Natural Resources Protection Law and Policy Course for Superintendents is presented for the second time in 1999, bringing the total to nearly 50 superintendents who attended the 32-hour training course during the year.

The Director's Awards for Natural Resource Stewardship are presented to five recipients for their contributions in leadership, research excellence, resource management, preservation of resources at a small park, and promoting sustainable park operations.

The federal government announces plans to enhance the protection of bison in Yellowstone National Park by acquiring land from the Royal Teton Ranch, Montana, which will augment the species' winter habitat north of the park.

The associate director for natural resource stewardship and science announces that AQUIMS, the Air Quality Information Management System, will be enhanced to incorporate more parks and more natural resource data systems, improving its utility as a standard interface for accessing resource information.

Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona, deploys portable air particulate samplers in conjunction with a managed fire to provide real-time information to decision makers in regard to smoke management.

### October

Wet scrubbers commence operation at the Navajo Generating Station near Page, Arizona, and are expected to reduce sulfur dioxide emissions by 90% and improve visibility during the winter at Grand Canyon National Park.

Owners of the Mohave Power Plant in Laughlin, Nevada, agree to install \$300 million worth of air pollution control equipment designed to significantly reduce sulfur dioxide emissions and improve visibility on the Colorado Plateau.

Earthmoving begins along Glorieta Creek at Pecos National Memorial, New Mexico, and involves removing dams and levees and reshaping the site to rehabilitate a native riparian-wetland system.

### November

Congress appropriates \$14.329 million in FY 2000 funds for implementation of natural resource inventories and other items, the first budget increases to be realized through the Natural Resource Challenge.

With assistance from several partners, including the U.S. Geological Survey, the National Park Service prepares to monitor mosquito populations at several units in the northeastern United States for the presence of West Nile virus, a mosquito-borne disease that kills free-ranging birds and can cause encephalitis in people.

### December

Director Stanton implements Resources Careers, the first action of the Natural Resource Challenge, to help the National Park Service fairly and effectively manage its natural and cultural resources personnel.

Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units (CESUs) for the Rocky Mountains and Colorado Plateau are staffed by the National Park Service, and begin to give managers access to the research, technical assistance, and educational tools available through the CESU network.



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**Avalanche lily** (*Erythronium montanum*); Mount Rainier National Park, Washington.



## The Year 1999 in Review

by Michael Soukup

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From the natural resource perspective, 1999 was a great success, filled with even greater promise. Amid many signs of natural phenomena bending to the press of human activity, there was a growing sense in the National Park Service of the importance and likelihood that the organization was capable of positioning itself for the challenges of the new millennium.

The focus of 1999 for those of us in natural resources was planning and then beginning to implement the Natural Resource Challenge. We barely had time to fret about Y2K. Finally, in October, natural resource management in parks received significant new increases from Congress for the first year of its five-year Challenge budget. The words in the House of Representatives appropriations bill state the rationale for these funds best:

The Committee has provided significant increases for the Service's natural resource initiative, including inventory and monitoring, natural resource preservation, native and exotic species management and for geologic expertise. The Committee applauds the Service for recognizing that the preservation of the diverse natural elements and the great scenic beauty of America's national parks and other units should be as high a priority in the Service as providing visitor services.

A major part of protecting those resources is knowing what they are, where they are, how they interact with their environment and what condition they are in. This involves a serious commitment from the leadership of the National Park Service to insist that the superintendents carry out a systematic, consistent, professional inventory and monitoring program, along with other scientific activities, that is regularly updated to ensure that the Service makes sound resource decisions based on sound scientific data.

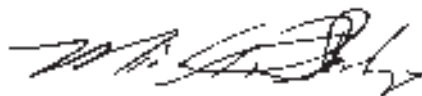
We agree. Jon Jarvis, superintendent of Mount Rainier National Park, wrote, "This is the first time natural resource management has had a significant contribution since George Wright used his own fortune to get wildlife management started in [the national park system in the 1930s]."

Congress also indicated that it would watch very closely how we fared in making progress toward our goals.

Along with apprehension about Y2K, there were some dark clouds in 1999. Major setbacks suggested that our commitment to environmental compliance and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was less than total. The reverberations from the Glacier National Park campgrounds lawsuit (*Coalition for Canyon Preservation v. Babbitt et al.*—see article on page 12), the Canyonlands off-road vehicle plan lawsuit (*Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance v. Dabney et al.*), and others highlighted unresolved conflicts over resource impacts in the administrative records underpinning our decisions and a lack of willingness to fully protect significant natural resources in the face of pressure for visitor uses. The Canyonlands decision should end any confusion as to whether the National Park Service can assume it should balance resource preservation with visitor accommodations; the judge reasoned that if resources are destroyed, visitor services probably will not be required in the long run. Happily, the NPS Management Policies had been scheduled to be revised in 1999, and new language was added to the draft before the public comment period began in December. The new language distinguishes between acceptable temporary impacts that may result from park management for visitor services and unacceptable long-term impairments (see article on page 5). This may finally bury the long-argued paradox of equal balance between resource protection and visitor accommodation. Director Stanton also formed a work group to make recommendations for making stellar NEPA compliance second nature to the National Park Service.

There were many other notable events in 1999, including the addition of Drs. Sylvia A. Earle, Shirley M. Malcolm, and Gary Paul Nabhan as the natural science members of a very supportive National Park System Advisory Board (see "Scientist Profiles" of these board members on page 18). Dr. Earle closes this issue with her review of the state of the oceans and the year's progress in response to the President's Executive Order on Coral Reef Protection (see page 61).

A very exciting, most promising year!




**Associate Director**  
Mike Soukup